Hooked on Dance (Instead of Marijuana)

Implementing After School Dance Programs to Keep Teens off drugs and off the Streets

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Summary: Keeping young people off the streets doing positive activities can be a challenge. The likelihood of young people engaging in illicit activities is often affected by factors such as family structure, parents’ levels of education, peer pressure and the community in which they live. Instituting positive programs and role models is likely to impact some of the young people to redirect them to more favorable choices. The physical, psychological, and social benefits of dance are explored as a possible means to steer young people away from the negative influences in their neighborhoods with the implementation of an after school dance program.

Video Link: http://youtu.be/BD0ab7R_RUY?list=UUts4_1WyqXMmVDfu9ZffstA

Increase in Adolescent Marijuana Consumption in the United States

Minority students in the United States living in low resource communities have a higher likelihood of dropping out of school than non-minority students or students living in well-off communities. These students usually come from low income African American families and immigrant families usually of Hispanic descent. Many of these immigrant families migrate to the United States in order to pursue a better future, however there are limitations such as language barriers that get in the way of this goal, as a result many parents invest their efforts in their children’s education hoping for a life better than that which they are able to provide. Yet there are many factors that influence the likelihood of a student to remain in school and pursue a career. Such influences begin at home and others arise from the community.

Marijuana use has been increasing among teenagers within the past decade in the United States. This increase has been observed in both urban and suburban communities. While there hasn’t been a direct correlation shown between marijuana use and school dropout rates, marijuana consumption is yet another distraction that can result in a student’s decision to lose focus in their academic career and engage in negative habits that might deter them off their academic path. Since most minority students already live in environments that have low resources and communities that don’t foster the value of education as much, it is important to motivate these students to focus on positive activities that nourish their chances of getting a better future. Parents have been shown to be strong role models in the lives of their children, however not all serve as positive role models and end up negatively impacting the lives of their children. While there are many parents that volitionally decide to not take part in their children’s lives and watch them destroy their future, there are parents that are not always aware of the activities that their children are engaged in and many don’t understand the negative consequences that can result from this. These parents while not purposely, are still negatively affecting the lives of their children. Because of this, role models that are aware of the problems going on in the streets of
their communities and understand the importance of keeping students away from these negative influences need to play a bigger role in the life of these students.

Dance has been shown to have positive cognitive effects on individuals. As a means to keep students off the streets and from engaging in activities such as the use of marijuana an after school program should be implemented in middle schools in disadvantaged communities, in which students are allowed to dance and participate in free yet professional classes. Sometimes parents want to find ways in which they can engage their kids in such positively enhancing activities, yet because of low resources they are not able to afford them. This after school program will give these students the opportunity to engage in an activity that will not only be fun for them but most importantly a positive guide to a better future.

**Marijuana use in the United States**

Marijuana consumption has become a popular trend among teenagers in the United States throughout this past decade. The use of marijuana among teens has increased from 5.8% to 7% of 8th graders, 13.8% to 18% of 10th graders, and 19.4% to 22.7% of 12th graders between 2008 and 2013 (1), in addition daily use of this recreational drug has increased from 5% in the mid 2000’s to 6.5%. There are various factors that influence an adolescent’s decision to engage in marijuana consumption, such include family structure, environmental factors, which might be influenced by the social economic status of the family and the community they live in, in addition social influences for example peer pressure and lastly the adolescent’s personal beliefs and interests.

**Family Structure and Role Models**

Research has shown that family structure has among the strongest influence on a student’s decision to engage in marijuana use. The primary factor within family structure that affects an adolescent’s behavior is the direct relationship that the adolescent has with his/her parent. The way in which the teen is being raised and the amount of time the parents are dedicating to them showed to have a strong effect on the tendency of adolescents to engage in “risky behavior” (alcohol and marijuana use and sex related activities). In a study conducted on high school students, females that were able to trust their parents showed less likelihood of engaging in sex related activities and substance abuse. Students that were constantly supervised by their parents showed a similar pattern. On the contrary those students that had “unsupervised time” showed increased risk behavior (2).

In addition, the relationship that other members of the family have can have an effect on the adolescent. A recent study showed that adolescents living with a single parent were more likely to engage in activities such as alcohol consumption, marijuana use and cigarette smoking, than adolescents living with both parents (3). Cognitive studies show that adolescents learn by identifying with others whether it is peers or family members. In dysfunctional divorced families where communication might be lost not only between the two parents but between the parents and the child, a child might lose the ability to identify with his or her parent and the trust between parent and child might also be lost as a result (4). Having a relationship in which teens are able to trust their parents is so important because only this way can their teenage kids open
up to them about the kinds of problems they are having or insecurities. If parents are not able to gain the trust of their kids it is not only harder for them to step into their lives and see what kind of activities they are engaging in, but also to give them advice and have their kid actually listen to it and follow it.

Furthermore, parents’ level of education can also influence teens’ likelihood of engaging with marijuana consumption. Teens living with two parents that went to college are less likely to engage in these activities than are teens who have parents that didn’t, and they are also less likely to drop out of school (5). Data from 2013 shows that a parent’s level of education has a bigger impact on younger students, beginning in the eighth grade, compared to students that are already in high school(6). One of the reasons for this appears to be that parents that have not received a college education are less likely to become engaged with the student’s work and don’t worry as much about their performance. This is likely to have more impact on an eighth grader who might still need help and guidance when it comes to their school work, than a high school student who is more independent and has better decision making capabilities.

One of the reasons why parents are such strong role models for their children is because in most occasions they are the primary example that their kids have to follow. The influence that parents have on their children are not only environmental but they are also biological (7). Certain tendencies, beliefs and behaviors can be inherited. For example a child who has an aggressive parent is likely to show aggressive behavior especially if exposed to it. Because parental influence can also be environmental, the way that parents raise their children and the examples and values that they set at home are integral to the child’s development and the person that they ultimately turn out to be (7). Even though a parent might have dropped out of school, or likes to smoke, they can show their children that they don’t have to do the same, and they do this by showing them positive behaviors in order to suppress biological tendencies and predisposition. The problem is that not all parents realize how their negative habits influence their children or they notice it and don’t do anything about it, as a result many teens end up believing it is okay to engage in similar habits or have the same mentality and begin to imitate their parents.

**Effects of community and Social Influences**

Environmental and social factors also have significant influence on the likelihood of a student to engage in marijuana use. Parents that come from backgrounds of little to no college education, or those that migrate from other countries and have low resources are likely to move and raise their children in low resource communities. These communities experience higher poverty levels, violence through gang associations and drug use. Many students become accustomed to this lifestyle and grow up believing that this is the only kind of life they can achieve, as a result this lifestyle becomes a norm and with time many begin to follow the same example. Students run a higher risk of engaging in these activities early on in their teen years because this is the kind of activity they are exposed to. These communities have been shown to be less likely to receive school funding which could support programs supporting student’s academic success or extracurricular activities (8). Drugs such as marijuana are becoming easier for young students to access in the streets; because of the lack of after school programs students are more likely to find activities outside of school and run a higher risk of engaging in negative activities. Many times parents want to involve their students in afterschool activities for example a sports’ team or dance team that might keep their child within a positive environment, however low incomes
don’t allow them to engage their children in these activities.

While the community in which one is living in might influence the likelihood of a teen deciding to try marijuana, the invitation to actually try it for the first time usually comes from a close friend or peer. Peer pressure has been shown to be one of the greatest reasons why teens even take the initiative to try marijuana for the first time. A study showed that there is a misconception among college students regarding the amount of students they believed to smoke marijuana or to have at least tried it. In this survey, 98% of the participants overestimated the amount of students they believed used marijuana in the past (9). The fact that students think that “everyone else is doing it” especially during the early teenage years, is likely to pressure a student to try the drug for the first time, either because they are afraid of what others might think, or ultimately since everyone else is doing it they might feel that trying the drug for the first time will not be bad. There needs to be a change in the mentality that these students have, first they need to know that not everyone is actually consuming or has consumed marijuana and in addition even if others are doing it, it does not necessarily mean it is okay.

**Student’s Own Personal Beliefs**

Ultimately the decision to smoke marijuana for the first time and to continue smoking it is left to the actual individual being presented with the decision. Regardless of the beliefs and influence of others taking the initiative to engage in a certain activity is up to the individual. With all the new laws in the United States regarding the legalization of marijuana the belief among teenagers that marijuana is not harmful has increased (10). This is a result of the misconception among certain adolescents that since the drug can be used medicinally then it cannot be so harmful if it is used recreationally. For example, claims that marijuana is a non-addictive drug and that it is one of the “safer” ones is a confirmation to those that decide to use it that there is no danger in smoking it (10).

**Long term effects (Cognitively and Socially)**

Marijuana use has cognitive effects, especially on young developing brains. Cannabidols which are cannabis compounds, have 64 isomers each having different effects on human health and behavior, as a result affecting brain structure and function (11). The pathways through which marijuana affects neurophysiological function are not completely understood. Some of the cognitive effects that marijuana use has on teenage users however have been observed in various studies. Long term marijuana users have shown signs of memory, attention and execution impairment compared to individuals that do not engage in marijuana consumption (12, 13). Even though the effect that marijuana can have on the brain and cognition depend on the age of the consumer and for how long they have consumed the drug, these studies support the notion that marijuana abuse among adolescents interferes with educational as well as vocational training in the long run (11).

One of the reasons why it is believed that marijuana is a non-addictive drug is due to the fact that there are no signs of withdrawal (11, 14). However, studies have shown that a marijuana dependency in fact develops over time. In addition, many marijuana users have shown to not be aware of the cognitive changes they are experiencing, for instance their memory impairment
The fact that young adults using marijuana are not able to realize the dangers that they are exposed to is perhaps one of the reasons they remain using it.

As a direct effect of the cognitive effects resulting from marijuana use a student’s academic performance is affected by it. These students do not perform to their full potential in school, are likely to get lower grades than their peers and become less engaged with their school work. The social and long term effects that early marijuana consumption can have on students as a result might be first: conforming to poor school performance and not setting high academic goals for themselves, and second as a result of their lack of interest in school become more engaged in their consumption eventually trying more dangerous drugs than marijuana. The ultimate result might be a student that is no longer interested in continuing their academic path and remains becoming engaged in negative activities.

**Teachers as Role Models**

Like parents, teachers serve as strong role models for teens, especially when it comes to their school performance. Students that are able to trust their teachers better and the school administration have been shown to perform better than those who do not. If students are able to find the positive role models in school that they are not able to obtain at home or in their community, then this can have an impact on their decision making and performance in school. Teachers are ideal role models for students in these kinds of situations because they understand the kind of problems that exist in the streets within their communities and are more likely to give their students better advice, not only in their school work but also in explaining to them why is it that activities such as smoking marijuana are bad and how they affect their health, something that not all parents might be able to explain.

By giving the support that perhaps some students don’t get at home and setting a positive environment within the school teachers and faculty members can be the guide that students need in order to remain focused on their academic paths and away from negative distractions. Forming a positive environment such as an after school dance program can be an effective and beneficial method of keeping students engaged in a positive activity.

**Physical Benefits of Dance**

Dance is a physical art form with scientific implications including anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, and health. Many people know that dance is a source of physical activity, but many people do not know the extent to how beneficial the movement that comes with dance is. Of course it is a great example of cardiovascular exercise, but there is much more detailed movement in the art of dance that will ultimately structure the body of the dancer. Dance requires a greater range of motion where movement is considered limitless, and this accounts to why many dancers are both flexible and strong. The different movements of dance must be trained into their body so they must move outside the comfort of their own body. Body rolls are a prime example that shows how dance is so simple yet so impressive. But when dancers do body rolls, it is like they are made of water because their greater range of motion allows them to make the roller more projective and fluid. This range of motion is seen in every dance. Ballet dancers must stretch everyday to achieve the flexibility that the dance requires.
must train every muscle in their body to keep up with the strength and stamina their dance requires. Contemporary dancers have such abstract movement that their range of motion is incredible. Dancers must train hard to have this greater motion, which is what is so captivating about the way they move.

The body control that is required for dance is both exponential and vital. The reason why people are so impressed with belly dancers, poppers, hip-hop dancers are because of their body control. Often times when watching dancers, people are amazed and wonder how they can possibly move in such a way. The answer is body control. Training your muscles to the smallest muscle fiber is what it takes for these dancers to display such an incredible movement. They must train and know their body well enough so that belly dancers can precisely move their hips in a certain direction, or poppers to isolate a single part of their body or hip-hop dancers to change their dance texture. There are so many ways one can dance: soft, hard, smooth, sassy, sexy, vulnerable, etc. To shift from one of these textures to another requires a lot of body control and in order to do that, one must train and know their body so well that they can easily change from one to the other.

Dance is often times considered a good cardiovascular exercise because it requires endurance. Rehearsals run hours long and the body needs to maintain the stamina to keep going until the end of rehearsal. Even though performances run only a couple minutes, those minutes are action packed. During those few minutes, the dancer has to perform the choreography all out and 100% while maintaining their body control, awareness of their space, and execution. Some particular dances that require high extensive endurance are Latin ballroom, jazz, house, and hip-hop. This is mostly because the footwork for these dances are so detailed and quick that it takes all their stamina to keep up with the dance. No matter what style of dance is pursued, there will always be a physical benefit to dance.

**Psychological Benefits of Dance**

Dance is fun and its effect on psychological health and maturity is evident. During times when we are stressed or frustrated with the events that are going on with our lives, we need to find a temporary escape to a happy place, and that place can easily be dance. In a study that investigated effect of dance over depression, results showed that after a 12 week dance training period, depression levels had significantly decreased in both males and females. Other research studies have found dance to help individuals with self-concept and lower levels of anxiety. These studies are strong evidence of dance’s positive effect over the psychological development (18).

Dance is a subjective art where there is no right or wrong and it is a universe where creativity explodes. There is creativity for learning, teaching, and choreographing. This is where the creativity starts and is built even greater when they are exposed to the creativity of others. Because of this creativity, kids will have the courage to pursue their own thoughts and ideas and not have to feel like they are being judged. This can relay itself to other aspects of their lives and allow them to feel more confident in their thoughts and opinions.

Children can enjoy themselves and express their emotions freely. Sometimes, children with
tough childhoods have a lot of emotions and feelings built up within themselves and it is not healthy to retain all that negative energy within themselves. If they feel they do not have anyone to express these emotions to, dance can serve as an outlet to release their emotions and create a temporary escape from reality. Dance can be the simple solution for children to vent out their emotions and ultimately proceed their days with more ease and a better mentality. The dance studio can serve as a safe, comfortable place where the dancer feels successful and accepted. With stable emotions and higher self esteem, their attitudes will then affect all their other activities and future endeavors. This self-esteem can relay itself to other aspects in life to increase involvement and motivation and make the individual more willing to take challenges (17, 19).

**Social Benefits of Dance**

The dance studio can serve as the home of amazing collaborations. Dance is universal and with the many people that dancers interact with, they can share ideas, teach and learn dances, and work with a group for a large performance. All this requires some degree of communication with the child and fellow dancers. These are attributes that can ultimately lead the child to speak effectively and become a leader in their dance community. This becomes extremely beneficial to the child or teen because social skills are essential to any job or career when growing up. The social environment that comes with dance will allow them to prepare themselves for better communication, social, and networking skills that will become impressive and natural when they get older (17).

When dancers work together to create a dance or set, teamwork is essential to create the final product. Dancers must work collaboratively, exchanging their ideas and sharing their point of views. Children quickly learn to work within a group dynamic. As the ongoing and sometimes challenging process of cooperation evolves, children learn to understand themselves in relation to others. This will ultimately develop their communication skills to discuss and negotiate decisions for the collaborative project. These social skills can expand and be applicable to other situations a dancer experiences outside the realm of dance (16).

**Full Engagement and Character Building through Dance**

The most beneficial aspect of dance that can help these struggling, growing children is the requirement of full engagement. In order to perform well in any dance, the dancer must focus on their body, execution, and the audience. Every detail is essential to creating the overall picture. As children enjoy dance more, they will work harder to improve themselves. That will require them to evaluate their weaknesses and change their habits in order to see improvement. Only if they are attentive and focused to the details will they see greater results. This can be very beneficial for kids as they are growing up. This creates a good work ethic for children because it shows them that goals require hard work for them to be achieved. And if this work ethic can be translated to the everyday tasks of school and life, these children are set for success.

Self-discipline and self-efficacy are cultivated through dance. Dance requires physical and mental demands and once the dancer realizes the amount of this demand, he or she must organize and manage their time and activities to keep up with their schedule. Their schedule and
time management will accommodate school, rehearsal, and family obligations (20). Self-efficacy increases with dance in which the individual works even harder for success. A dancer's accomplishment can come in the form of performances which increases self-efficacy. Choreographing for a performance is an accomplished task that will prompt the individual to attempt more choreographing and engage in more challenges in the future. This will sculpt bravery and inspiration into the dancer and have that mentality when continuing on with different activities (20).

**Success Stories**

Though dance is a physically demanding activity, it is one of the most enjoyable ways to work-out especially since music is so universal. Because of this, health is a large benefit for dancers. This benefit was seized by Angela Baldwin. Baldwin, a woman initially weighing 350 pounds and had lived her whole life being overweight, lost 127 pounds and believes her first dance class saved her life. “The music moved my soul. Even though I felt sure I was going to die after each song, I kept moving” she said. Her dance instructor remarks, “She went from hiding in the back of class -- very shy, very withdrawn -- to moving to the front of class with a very outgoing and can-do attitude. She is a different person today in body, spirit and attitude.” Baldwin’s story combines not only displays the physically healthy benefits of dance, but also the psychological benefits, too (23).

An inspiring story about 10 New York City children learning ballroom dance is told in the documentary film, *Mad Hot Ballroom*. The story is set in a New York City public school where fifth graders were involved in a dance program that taught various styles of ballroom dance, which included rumba, tango, fox trot, merengue and swing (24). We are brought along with the children on their journey as they practice and train to compete in a citywide competition. They fall in love with the activity and find themselves wanting to be there than anywhere else. The children reveal an underlying maturation as they strive to learn the intricacies and precise movements of ballroom dancing. Ballroom dancing requires a strong interaction between dancers. Throughout the practices and training, children have developed stronger social interaction skills as they learn to work with their partners and cheer for their team when competition time comes. For performance time, the children work hard and focus as they strive to win the round for their team. Most maturity is seen during the awards ceremony. Though they did not win the entire competition, they learned to be proud of their hard work and achievements reached thus far. If dance can lead to such beneficial attributions, why not start children up on this activity early on?

**Community Action:**

Many kids living in urban communities are very subject to bad influences in their neighborhood. Positive factors are essential for them to contribute to their development and provide a preventative measure away from negative activities, like drug use. Kids and adolescents need to be resilient against these negative pressures. Adolescent resiliency is linked to empowerment theory where the focus relies on strengths, social linkage and participation, and person-environment interaction. It has been found that particular benefits of dance overlap with these
concepts of empowerment theory, which can aid in kids and teens to withstand negatives pressure of their community.

In order to steer kids and teenagers away from the influence of marijuana, we propose a dance program to keep them off the streets and allow them to reap the benefits of dance. Depending on the particular dance studio, instructor, class level, and whether it is a private or open class, prices can range from $10 - $25 for a single one-hour class. These prices for dance classes are often too expensive for kids of struggling communities to consistently go, so in order for them to attain the numerous benefits of dance, in collaboration with the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) program, we introduced a dance to them by holding an introductory dance workshop and invited all who were interested to attend. Our hope was that a fun and engaging dance experience during the workshop will kick-start their interest and keep them yearning for more. Creating this habit will keep them hardworking in the dance studio rather than spending their time on negative activities.

In our workshop we were able to educate the teachers of the physical, psychological, social, and cognitive advantages that come with dancing. Sometimes dance and other art forms are overlooked as just leisurely activities. Convincing teachers that dancing is more than just a hobby, but is actually incredibly beneficial to both body and mind, will keep a dance program active throughout the school year.

The dance session was taught to students from grades ranging from fourth to eighth. After a successful class the director of the program became interested in having dance sessions, among other art forms such as drawing, music and theater classes, as part of their after school program. As a continuation of this project we will help the YES program find volunteers within the Rutgers community, specifically dance clubs that are willing to serve as volunteers for young adults. Some of the dance clubs we plan to contact are: Rutgers Performing Dance Company, BBoy Student Organization of Rutgers, Swing Dance Club, Rutgers Salsa Club, and RAPS Dance Troupe.

Our hope is that schools in New Brunswick and other cities can see the benefits from having this kind of program, and the need that these cities have for more art programs in their schools.

**Conclusion**

The amount of marijuana use in teens, especially teens living in urban neighborhoods, has increased tremendously over the years, and it is due to a variety of factors including peer pressures, the neighborhood they live in and sometimes even their own family. It is vital for kids and teens to be resilient to the negative pressures in the neighborhoods that they grow up in so they are not subject to drug influences, like marijuana. There needs to be a positive factor in their lives that will empower them to resist such pressures.

Dance can be that positive factor. Empowerment theory focuses on the individual's strength, social-linkage and participation, and person-environment interaction and is correlated to adolescent resiliency. Dance has shown to be effective in physical, psychological, social, and character development. Knowing these benefits, we can hypothesize that dance has the potential
to empower the teen, adolescent, or any individual to ultimately build up a strong enough resilience against the pressure of marijuana and other drugs.

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Letters to the Editor

October 28, 2014

Tom Moran
Editorial page Editor/columnist
Newark Star-Ledger

Dear Mr. Moran:

The amount of teenagers engaging in the use of marijuana has been increasing in the United States for the past decade. Starting with students as young as eighth graders, this number is slowly increasing and the use of marijuana has become not only more popular among teens but also more conventional. There are many factors that affect the likelihood of a teenager engaging in the use of marijuana, many of which have to do with family structure, peer pressure, community, and lately the belief that marijuana is not a dangerous drug partly as a result of the new laws legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes.

I have lived in Newark for the past ten years and I’ve been able to witness the effects of engaging in activities such as marijuana consumption. Not only did I see this among many classmates while still being in high school, but I now see it even more among current high school and middle school students. Even though a direct correlation between marijuana use and drop-out rates has not been found, the use of marijuana can lead to the consumption of other addictive drugs and activities that shift the student’s focus from their academic path onto negative ones. Marijuana use has been shown to have both cognitive and social effects on its users, and it is important to encourage our students to engage in more positive activities and beneficial activities.

In order to do this I am proposing implementing after school programs in Newark middle schools, in which students receive free dance lessons by an instructor. The goal of this program would be to keep young students out of the streets and find positive influences within their schools. While there are various extracurricular activities already available in middle schools not many schools teach students dance. Dancing has been shown to have positive cognitive effects on students, this program will allow them to try something new and encourage them to participate in positive activities within the school rather than negative ones outside of school.

We want to encourage dancers to volunteer as dance instructors for these program. Professional dancing is not required, rather enthusiastic instructors that are concerned about our students and want to see them prosper. We also want to encourage parents and school faculty to bring this to the attention of our middle school principals and also Newark Public Schools superintendent so that the implementation of this program can take place.
It is integral that our future generations remain in school and seek to aspire a more successful lifestyle. It is important for our teenagers to understand the long-term negative effects that marijuana use can have on their future, and the importance of staying focused and excelling in school. This program will be another asset in helping our community find positive influences for our students, yet in order for it to take place the public must be aware of the issues taking place in our community and why it is important that we take care of them now.

Sincerely,

Nicole Reynoso

Dear Paterson Times Editor,

A fellow Rutgers University student and I have recently been researching the power of role models and the benefits of dance, specifically focusing on their impact on teenagers growing up in neighborhoods where marijuana use and alcohol consumption is commonplace. We hope individuals will see our findings to be advantageous to the Paterson community and possibly convince middle schools that implementing a dance program can be very beneficial.

Over the past couple years, Paterson has unfortunately been the setting of numerous criminal activities, causing its residents to feel unsafe and the town to receive a dangerous reputation. Teenagers living in a crime-ridden town are very susceptible to bad influences and may partake in violence, marijuana use and alcohol consumption, especially if their parents also engage in these activities, too. These are the kids that need the most guidance and have to have access to good role models who can help shape a better future for them.

Role models have great influence on individuals' mindsets, goals, and aspirations. But it is during childhood and teenage years, when their characters are still developing, where a role model can be most beneficial and capable of creating a large impact. The right kind of role model can help stray these kids away from the bad influences of the town and help them seek a brighter future.

Based on several research studies, dance has been found to have a wide variety of benefits, ranging from physical, psychological, social, and neuro-cognitive advantages. Specific examples include cardiovascular improvements, increase in creativity, outlet of emotion, teamwork, leadership, and improved observational learning. Some of these benefits can be carried outside the dance studio and can possibly serve as strong skills or create a good work ethic in other settings. But the beauty of dance is that, with the myriad of styles that exist, it is universal and enjoyed by everyone. Dance rehearsals will be far more attractive than alcohol or marijuana.

A dance teacher can be a strong influential figure that will help teenagers develop and build a strong character while, at the same time, keep them away from local violence, marijuana use, and alcohol consumption. Incorporating some kind of dance program in middle schools can help the students reap the benefits of dance, apply the benefits of dance to other aspects of their lives, shape their characters, and essentially live above the negative influences they had grown up around.
Rachel Sadang
Rutgers University Student